

North San Jose – Area Development Policy Update



Above and Below: Images of North San Jose today and in its potential future.



Images courtesy of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) & Silicon Valley Action Network

The North San Jose Area Development Policy is one of the key land use policies affecting the development of San Jose's largest employment area. The North San Jose area is home to many of the City's high-tech industry companies, including Agilent, BEA, Sun Microsystems, Altera, Cisco, Hitachi, eBay, Atmel, Sony, KLA Instruments, Hynix, Canon, Samsung and Cypress Semiconductors.

The current Policy was adopted by the City in 1988 as part of a collaborative effort with Milpitas, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto and Santa Clara County to address regional traffic problems and has 5 primary elements. The most visible of these is a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) cap that limits development to an FAR of 40% for sites located within 2000 feet of a light rail station and to an FAR of 35% for the rest of North San Jose. As a result of this restriction, typical development in the area is limited to one or two-story buildings and surface parking lots.

As industrial land is a precious resource for San Jose, the City would like to make better use of the North San Jose area consistent with regional traffic management goals and

smart growth planning principles. Intensification of the North First Street corridor will encourage greater use of the VTA light rail system and other existing infrastructure while reducing growth pressure upon the City's outlying areas. While updating the North San Jose policy has been on the City's "wish list" for some time, the issue became even more pressing last year when two big companies (eBay and BEA) approached the City with proposals to develop large, more urban corporate campuses in the policy area. Updating the policy was also identified as an important task during the "Getting Families Back to Work" study sessions conducted by the City Council.

Beginning in January of this year, a City staff team including members of Department of Planning Building and Code Enforcement, the Redevelopment Agency, the Department of Transportation, the Office of Economic Development and the Department of Public Works began working on the development of a new vision and policy for North San Jose. A critical task for this team is the modeling of future traffic conditions in order to fully identify and analyze the likely traffic and other environmental impacts of the proposed land uses. Based on the analysis, the team is identifying the specific roadway improvements needed to provide additional development capacity for North San Jose. The staff team is working closely with an environmental consultant (David Powers and Associates) and a traffic consultant (Hexagon) in order to complete this task.

This team has determined that the best approach will likely be a set of policies that allow the intensification of industrial development along the North First Street corridor between Brokaw Road and Montague Expressway. The team is exploring policies that would promote more urban land uses, including mixed-use development, additional pedestrian and transit amenities, and a refined street grid system within this core area. The image above provides a sample illustration of this type of development. This focus on a core area would in turn be balanced by a set of citywide transportation improvements to address future vehicle traffic, including upgrades to some key North San Jose intersections.

The project is at its halfway point with public outreach efforts anticipated to begin in full force in October. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project is scheduled to be distributed for public review sometime near the end of the year. It is anticipated that the San Jose City Council will consider this new policy (and a new vision) for North San Jose sometime in early 2005.